

LAUGHED AT DEATH.

INCIDENTS IN THE LIFE OF THE FAMOUS GAINSBOROUGH.

His Portrait of the Beautiful Duchess of Devonshire—How He Catered to His Love For Music—The Request of Sheridan and the Artist's Peculiar Death.

One of the most eminent names in British art is that of Thomas Gainsborough. He was born in Suffolk, England, in 1727, and died in London Aug. 2, 1788, in his sixty-first year. He had a handsome face and easy, persuasive manners. He painted portraits, but was most distinguished as a landscape painter. Says a critic: "Nature sat to him in all her attractive attributes of beauty, and his pencil traced with peculiar and matchless facility her finest and most delicate lineaments, whether it was the sturdy oak, the twisted elm, the moor whetting his girth, the whistling plovers or the shepherd under the hawthorn in the dale—all came forth equally chaste from his imitable and fanciful pencil."

He painted a portrait of the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire, but it was so little to his satisfaction that he refused to send it to Chatsworth. Her dazzling beauty and gay conversation took away, for the time, the readiness of his hand and the hasty painting of his touch. Drawing his wet pencil across the mouth, which all saw it thought exquisitely lovely, he said, "Her grace is too hard for me." The portrait is supposed to have been destroyed.

A certain lord once came to sit for a portrait. He had put on a new suit of clothes, with a well powdered wig. He took his seat with a practiced look of such importance and grandeur that Gainsborough began to laugh and was heard to mutter, "This will never do."

"Now, sir," said the lord, "I beg you will not overlook the dignity of my chin." "Contented the dignity of your chin," replied the artist. "I shall not paint the one nor the other." He at once laid down his brushes and refused to resume them. He was not a flatterer with either his tongue or his pen.

He had a lover's tender, but, while he possessed one, he was not a lover. He did not have affection enough to learn his notes. He filled his house with all kinds of musical instruments. Having noticed a throb in a patient's hand, he determined to possess one. He assembled to the guitar of a German professor, who was found dining on roasted apples and smoking his pipe with his thebes beside him. "I am come," said Gainsborough, "to buy your lute. Name your price and here's your money."

"I can't sell my lute," replied the professor. "No, not for a guinea or two! But you must wait till I sell it." "My lute is worth much money—its worth is 10 guineas." "Aye, that it is. See, here's the money."

So saying, Gainsborough took the instrument, laid down the price and went half way down the stairs and then returned. "Have I not half my grand?" he said. "What is your lute worth if I have not your book?" "What book, Master Gainsborough?" "Why, the book of airs you have composed for the lute."

"Ah, sir, I can never part with my book." "Fool, you can make another at any time. This is the book I mean. There's 10 guineas for it. So you have good day." He went down a few steps, when he returned again. "What is the use of your book to me if I don't understand it?" he asked, "and your lute? You may take it again if you won't teach me to play on it. Come home with me and give me the first lesson."

"I will come tomorrow." "You must come now." "I must dress myself." "For what?" "You are the best figure I have seen today."

"I must show, sir." "I honor your beard." "I must, however, put on my wig." "D—n your wig. Your cap and beard become you. Do you think if Vandyke was to paint you he'd let you be shaved?"

In this eccentric fashion he carried off the poor German professor to teach him the lute. He admitted to his table professors of all kinds of instruments except bag pipes. Once when a gentleman played very finely, Gainsborough exclaimed, "Go on, and I will give you the picture of 'The Boy at the Spill,' which you so often wished to purchase of me." The gentleman proceeded, while the painter stood in speechless admiration, with tears of rapture on his cheeks. At the end of the music the gentleman called a coach and carried away the picture.

Sir George Beaumont, Sheridan and Gainsborough were to dine together on a certain occasion, says another. "They met, but a cloud had descended upon the spirit of Gainsborough, and he sat silent, with a look of fixed melancholy which no wit could dissipate. At length he took Sheridan by the hand, led him out of the room and said: 'Now, don't you laugh, but listen. I shall die soon. I know it. I have less time to live than my looks infer, but for this I leave not. What oppresses my mind is this—I have many acquaintances and few friends, and I wish to have one worthy man to accompany me to the grave. I am desirous of bespeaking you. Will you come—aye or no?' Sheridan could scarcely repress a smile as he made the required promise. The look of Gainsborough changed up like the sunshine in one of his own landscapes. Throughout the rest of the evening his wit flowed and his humor ran over, and the minutes, like those of the poet, mingled their way with pleasure."

In view of this incident it was singular that about a year later Gainsborough went to hear the Impromptu of Warren Hastings, in which Sheridan took such an important part, when he suddenly felt a peculiar sensation in his neck. This prepared the cause of his death. He prepared himself for death with cheerfulness and composure. He remarked to Sir Joshua Reynolds, "We are all going to heaven, and Vandyke is of the company." This prepared him to his promise and followed his lamented and talented friend to the grave.—New York Mercury.

Her Voluntary Act.
"You sign this deed of your own free will, do you, madam?" asked the notary public.
"What do you mean by that?" demanded the large, florid faced woman.
"I mean there has been no compulsion on the part of your husband, has there?"
"Him?" she ejaculated, turning to look at the meek little man sitting behind her.
"I'd like to see him try to compel me!"
—Chicago Tribune.

A Spoiled Girl of Nine Years.

Her name need not be given. It would be unkind to pillory a child for the sake of her foolish parents. She has a beautiful little sitting room in white and gold, the walls are hung in rose tinted silk, and special pieces of furniture have been designed for it, including a small secretary in ornate with Sevres plaques, where she may carry on her little correspondence. Here are her toys, the elegant gifts she receives from her friends, and there she receives her friends.

Adjoining this is her bedroom in satin-finish, and a little brass couch hung with blue satin curtains. A dressing room is attached, and this is the culmination of luxury. The dressing room is quite large. The marble bath is set against the wall. The low marble basin is supplied with perfumed soaps. Sponges of all sizes and sorts hang in silver racks. Perfumed waters in cut glass bottles, cold creams, delicate lotions, all find a place. On her bureau are laid out expensive brushes and combs in repoussé silver, and exquisite toilet bottles and manicure sets of pearl.

In one corner is placed a long eveline chair, which she may contemplate her skirts and her dainty footgear. The propriety of calling this child's attention so specifically to the care of the body is already manifested, and one can only wonder what there will be in reserve for her when she is grown.—Philadelphia Times.

How Eugenie Dressed.
The empress usually wore a velvet of rich dark colors, which were particularly becoming to her exquisitely fair complexion. The empress liked to see her richly dressed and often objected to the extreme simplicity of her morning attire, which, it must be acknowledged, was often so fanciful to be appropriate to her high position. Everything she wore was well made and perfectly neat. Her hair was beautifully dressed, but she liked the comfort of loose garibaldi bodices of red flannel with a plain black silk skirt over a red flannel undershirt, all of which was concealed when she went out by a handsome cloak and the fur coverings of the open carriage.

I have seen her wear within the palace a tight jacket of knitted black wool, with a gray bander, over the silk and ermine dress which she wore as second mourning for her father, the Duke of Aosta. It was a sort of wrap which one would expect to see on the shoulders of some old crone, but she wore it, rather than on the graceful figure of the beautiful empress of the French. I might quote other instances, such as a loose jacket of a small black and white check, bordered with red flannel, etc.—Century.

Beauties of the Material Life.
All the hyms, all the prayers, all the Scripture readings are as nothing unless you make their beauty come into your daily life, writes Ruth Ashmore in The Ladies' Home Journal. Take some of the care of the shoulders of the busy mother. Make life seem more pleasant by your gracious thought of that father who toils all day long. Make it easier for a sister to dislike the wrong and do the right. Show a brother the way side of the cross and so make it lighter for him to carry. And do all this, not with loud protestations, but quietly and gently, letting God's name be whispered in your heart and being only to the sister and daughter without forcing the knowledge that you are the Christian. Then, very soon, some one will realize that your beautiful life is lived for Christ's sake and then you will represent him, as all women should, not by speaking from the pulpit, but by giving commands, but by living every day the life that he would wish should be yours.

A Modest Flagmaker.
There is a trim and pretty maiden in New York city who never speaks about the new woman or of woman's rights and yet who has gone right in as if she believed in the new woman just the same. The young woman's name is Miss Zola Citti, and she is in the business of making ensigns, flags, burses and flags for yachts.

Several years ago she happened in a roundabout way to make a flag for a yacht. She made it so well as to attract attention, and soon the yachtmen of New York were patronizing her. As time passed on and her fame spread she found that orders came in from all over the country. So she opened a modest little shop in South street and began the first step toward fortune. Miss Citti now has a big shop and employs a couple of assistants. Yet she is never spoken of as one of "those new women."—New York Journal.

Scripture Cakes.

A formula for Scripture cakes is sent to Household News by a woman who adds the information that she realized \$10 for the sale of slices of this cake, with its recipe, for two days at a church fair:

SCREPTURE CAKE.
One cup of butter—Judges v. 25.
Three and a half cups of flour—1 Kings iv. 22.
Two cups of sugar—Jeremiah xl. 20.
Two cups of raisins—1 Samuel xix. 12.
Two cups of figs—1 Samuel xxx. 17.
One cup of water—Genesis xxiv. 17.
One cup of almonds—Genesis xlii. 11.
Six eggs—Isaiah x. 14.
One tablespoonful of honey—Exodus xvi. 21.
A pinch of salt—Leviticus ii. 13.
Spices to taste—1 Kings x. 10.
Follow Solomon's advice for making good boys and you will have a good cake.—Proverbs xiii. 14.

A Mother's Love.
Washington Irving said: "The love of a mother is never exhausted; it never changes; it never tires. A father may turn his back upon his child, brothers and sisters may become inveterate enemies, husbands may desert their wives, wives their husbands, but a mother's love endures through all—in good repute, in bad repute, in the face of the world's condemnation, a mother still loves on and still hopes that her child may turn from his evil ways and repent. Still she remembers the infant smiles that filled her heart with rapture, the merry laugh, the joyful shout of his childhood, the opening promise of his youth, and she can never be brought to think him unworthy."—

Children and Disease.
Children should never be allowed to chew gum promiscuously, nor to put salt or lead pencils in the mouth. The necessity of these cautions may be readily demonstrated. Suppose a family whose members all seem to be in the best of health. They are in the habit of using dishes promiscuously. One of the children complains of sore throat and within a day or two it develops into malignant diphtheria. All those children who have been using the same spoon or other utensils used by the sick child are infected, and thus the whole family may be exposed to that most dread disease.

MELONS FROM DUST.

ONLY FRUIT THAT WILL GROW IN THE STAKED PLAINS.

Large and Juicy Watermelons Produced on the "Great American Desert," Where It Never Rains—A Partial Explanation of the Mystery.

When a stranger visits these "staked plains" of Texas, he soon learns not to be surprised at anything he sees. He has heard of this region as the life as a portion of the "Great American desert" and one of the driest parts of the world. He finds by actual observation that few crops will grow here on account of the dryness. It seems to be too dry for corn, wheat, oats, cotton, garden vegetables or fruit of any description. The few farmers in the country content themselves with raising hay or sorghum cane. Yet, strange to relate, there is one plant in whose favor nature chooses to make an exception. She seems to have made a law for producing food plants to grow in this region and then arbitrarily to have suspended this law in one instance. To heighten the audacity of this move on her part she seems to have racked her brain for the vegetable growth which we would least expect to find here. The one she selected was the watermelon.

Every farmer's boy knows that ordinarily the watermelon requires a great deal of moisture before it will grow well. It also generally requires shade. In the east the watermelon patch is frequently in some cool or moist corner of the cornfield, where the growing vines will soon be overhauled by the stalks of corn. This is not merely for the benefit of such neighboring boys as may desire to eat watermelons without disclosing the general public, but it is also for the benefit of the melons themselves.

Boys accustomed to look for melons in such places as that would be surprised to find them in this country lying out on the open prairie, where the hot sun glares down on them all day long, with never a cloud to intercept and never a tree or a bush for shade as far as the eye can reach. Sometimes not a drop of rain falls from the time the seed is planted in the spring until the melon becomes in the early summer. Yet they thrive. And such melons as these are not long, slender ones, but big round ones, light green ones, dark green ones and striped ones—all and plenty, big fellows. To come some morning-late summer, while it is yet cool, and see a great stretch of such fruit lying down and the short, curly muskmelon grass on some 40 or 50 acres of land is enough to make a white man's mouth water like that of a horse in a field of new clover and to make a black man drop dead in his tracks from derangement of the heart function. This is nothing, though, compared to eating to such a pitch about noon, when the vertical rays of the sun are pouring down at their fiercest and when your throat is parched with a thirst that is fierce still. At such a time as this you slip your left arm through the bridge of your third pair of trousers, feeling down and the short curly muskmelon grass on some 40 or 50 acres of land is enough to make a white man's mouth water like that of a horse in a field of new clover and to make a black man drop dead in his tracks from derangement of the heart function. This is nothing, though, compared to eating to such a pitch about noon, when the vertical rays of the sun are pouring down at their fiercest and when your throat is parched with a thirst that is fierce still. 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